Fall 1985

MEDALLIC SCULPTURE

Official Publication of the American Medallic Sculpture Association

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No. 2 Fall 1985

Editors:
Cory Gillilland
N. Neil Harris

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Membership Application .... IBC

The purpose of the **American Medallic Sculpture Association** (AMSA) is to encourage the creation and study of medallic sculpture in North America. All who are interested are welcomed as members. Our aim is to disseminate information and add impetus in making medallic sculpture a vital and viable art form in this country. AMSA organizes exhibitions, produces a journal and holds meetings in New York City. Membership is $25 per year. Inquiries should be addressed to Thelma Beckerman, 62 Brighton First Terrace, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

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Front: **Statue of Liberty** by Eugene Daub, struck bronze or silver, 100 by 77mm,
by Marika Somogyi, struck bronze, silver, or gold-plated, 44mm,
by Barbara Hyde, struck bronze or silver, 33mm. *(clockwise, from top)*
Back: Reverses of medals listed above.

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND THE STUDIO

by Edward R. Grove
Medallist/Sculptor

With few exceptions, the sculptor's tools are merely specialized extensions of his fingers. These tools are shaped in either hardwood, aluminum, steel or are made of wire loops in various sizes and shapes. Probably the best are imported from Italy; and, reasonably priced, are available through the catalogs of supply sources such as Sculpture Associates or Sculpture Services, Inc. Since the medallist, however, inevitably works in a smaller scale than the average sculptor, his tools must be of a proportionate size; and although more medalists are producing more bas-relief work than ever before, it still is not easy to locate small-scale modeling and wire tools.

If you are unable to find exactly the shapes you need, it is possible to make some of them yourself. Modeling tools should be made of a close-grained hardwood and I would suggest that you begin by buying one of the available sets of six inch or eight inch tools, usually of somewhat clumsy contours; and shape them yourself with knife, files, and sandpaper to the particular shapes you have in mind. Two or three may be sawed out of one of the large blade-shaped tools with a coping or jewelers' saw, then sanded to a smooth surface. Several of my own favorites have been made this way. The more sensitive and delicate the modeling is to be, the lighter and more delicate the weight and balance of the tool required.

For wire tools some of the most constantly used ones in my kit were made from discarded oil-painting brushes and paper clips! In *Figure 1* you can see how the worn bristles were sliced off at the ferrule, then two very small holes drilled into the ends of the bristle stubs. The paper clip was shaped with small pliers to the exact contour needed and the ends of the clip lined up with the holes in the brush-end. Next, the loop was fastened in a small vise with the ends protruding. The brush handle driven down over the ends of the clip, embedding them firmly. A drop of epoxy cement at each joint finished the job neatly; and when the epoxy had set, I used small Swiss files to refine the shape of the wire to a triangular cross-section. This was done for maximum cleanness of cutting.

Paper clips come in a variety of sizes, brass ones are best for our purpose. Paint brushes also are produced in many sizes so you can make the small shapes you need. Texture grooves as those found on wire tools that are scaled for larger work may be filed on the edges of the wire clip, if you like.

In addition to the above modeling and cutting tools, the medallist must possess a variety of steel-bladed scrapers and cutters for working in plaster. Some of these are available in the catalogs mentioned above, but many of those I use are ones I've made in past years. They fall into two groups. One type may be used almost exclusively for cutting lettering in the negative and the others may be used for refining the modeling, and for repairing damage or mistakes, as well as for other purposes. A set of the former type, shown in *Figure 2* is graduated in widths from .035 inches to .10 inches, made from old injector razor blades cemented into a thin slot in the tapered end of a short dowel, then gently ground to exact dimension and contour on a fine wheel. These all have slightly more than the standard 150 taper which is required for all medallic models which are to be reduced on the Janvier machine.

Access to a small forge, of course, can be extremely useful in making your own steel plaster tools. High-carbon drill rod, ⅛ inch in diameter, makes excellent small tools, as does ⅛ inch square stock. Heated to a cherry red and shaped with peening hammers and then quenched and ground to a finished shape and edge, the tools will last for a long time. They are usually double-ended for convenience and economy and the center may be built up later with one of the plastic-metal compounds for a more comfortable grip.

Although not often needed in medallic work, an ideal tool for the rough shaping of casts and molds is perforated steel rasp. Several curved sizes are available in art supply houses, while the Stanley Surform, in flat and rounded versions, may be found at your neighborhood hardware store.

If you happen to be on good terms with your dentist, ask him to save you some of his discarded instruments. (Please, never call them "tools"). The small spherical- and egg-shaped burnishers, particularly are useful for modeling. Others such as the delicate scrapers work well for unusual contours.

In order to attain a fairly uniform depth when cutting the lettering in the negative plaster, some simple guage is needed. The one shown in *Figure 3* is part of a set made from

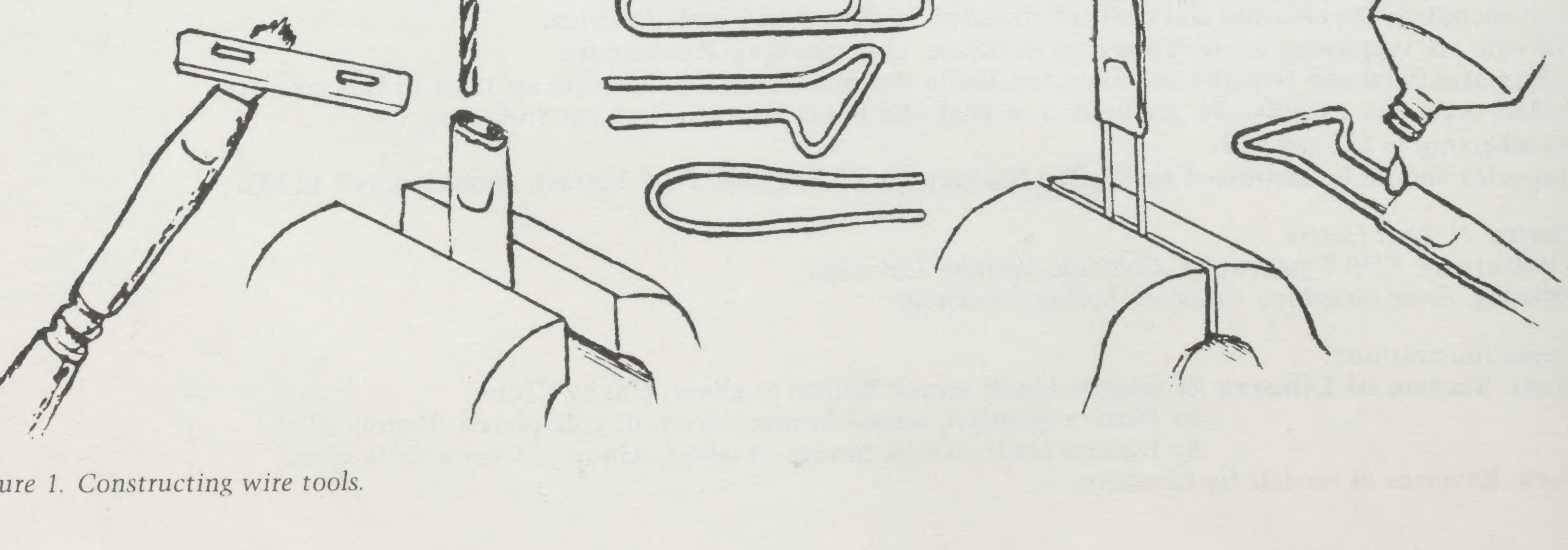


Figure 1. Constructing wire tools.

scraps of aluminum sheet and marked with the length of the little shoulder. This end may be inserted in the cut line and moved back and forth gently in each letter in order to check the evenness of depth and to avoid any damage to the surface around it.

Discarded credit cards have a combined flexibility and sharpness which makes them very useful in smoothing the clay in large areas or in scraping plaster sections. Of course small thin spring steel blades, about two by four inches, are made for this purpose.

A very important piece of equipment is the cradle, designed to hold the plaster discs while the modeling is being done, as well as later when the negative and final positive plasters are in process. My own cradle is simple in design. It is easy to make and very convenient to use in conjunction with either a table easel which adjusts to various angles of incline, or with a studio upright easel which I use when projecting the designs onto the plaster basins. This cradle consists of a back made of half inch plywood, approximately sixteen by twenty inches, with a cleat near the bottom. It is made of three-fourths inch plywood, sixteen inches long and three inches wide, with a segment of a circle, fourteen inches in diameter, cut out of the center of the lower edge. See *Figure 4*. A ten inch piece of hardwood, one and one-half by three-fourths inch, is fastened along the left-hand vertical edge and used as a guide for a T-square when checking the levels and parallels of lettering. Screw holes at several points around the upper circumference of the discs are for the heavy angle screws which clamp with tapered wooden wedges to hold the plasters firmly in place. The lower edge of the cleat is covered with a strip of heavy vinyl and a sheet of the same material is used to surface the back against which the discs rest. This reduces the abrasion of the edges and back of the plasters as they are frequently rotated during the work. It also protects the cradle, itself, from the dampness of the plasters.

Another handy accessory is a flat ten or twelve inch metal turntable, frequently found in television shops. This is useful during the carving of the letter forms in the damp negative.

Many medallists prefer to work standing at an easel as does a sculptor or painter, rather than to sit at a desk or bench as does an engraver. The standing medallist finds it easier to look at his work frequently from a slight distance. This brings us to the question of arranging sufficient space for our work. If a large, airy, well-lighted room with a large sink and running water is available, congratulations! Otherwise, if you can manage at least a large desk or table with a few drawers for tools and materials, you have a good start. The casting doesn't need to be done in the same room as the modeling and since it is a somewhat sloppy procedure at best, it is often relagated to the workshop, garage, or basement.

A skylight is great for the sculptor but it is by no means a necessity for the medallist. His lighting needs are both modest and critical. Modest, in that he usually works under a single light source, but critical, too, because that one light must be capable of almost infinite adjustment so that he may examine his modeling when illumined from literally every angle. The lower the degree of relief in which he works, the flatter and more subtle the light must be to enhance the illusion of depth he seeks. Also, since the need is for sharpness rather than general illumination, the incandescent bulb is more effective than the fluorescent tube with its soft, diffused glow. The jointed-arm type of work light, spring-balanced, with a swivel head and either a heavy base or firm bracket is ideal for the purpose. Of the

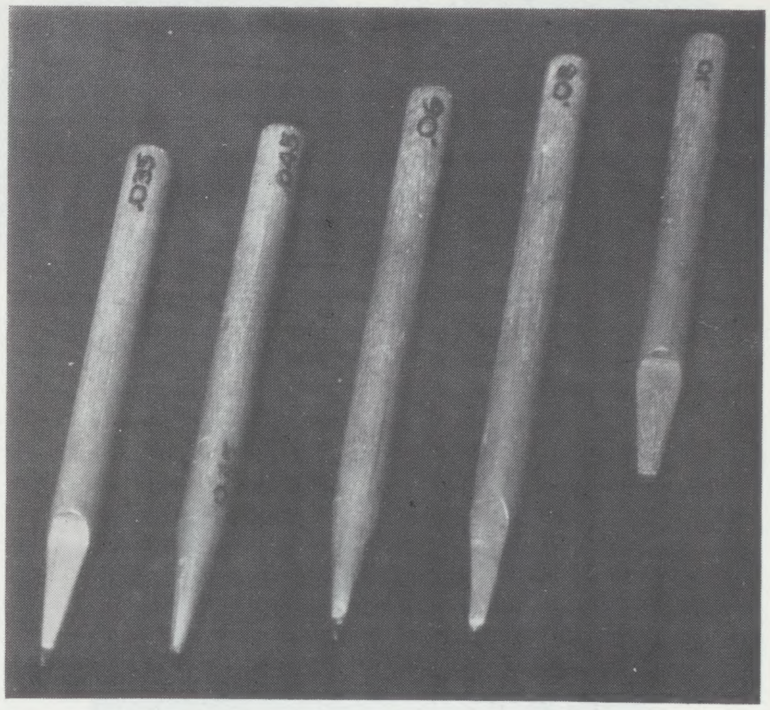


Figure 2. Tools for cutting the lettering in plaster.

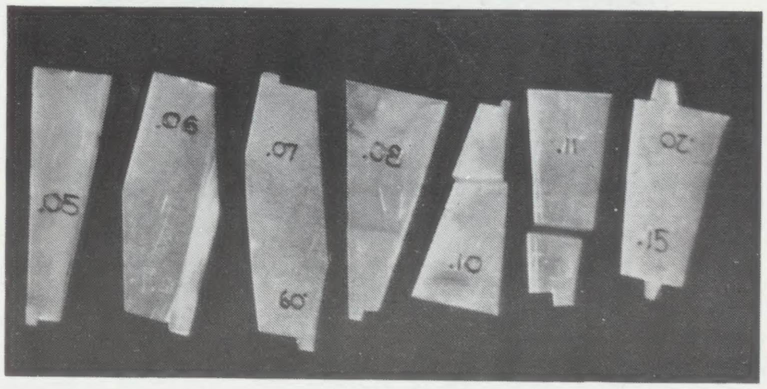


Figure 3. Tools to gauge the depth of lettering.

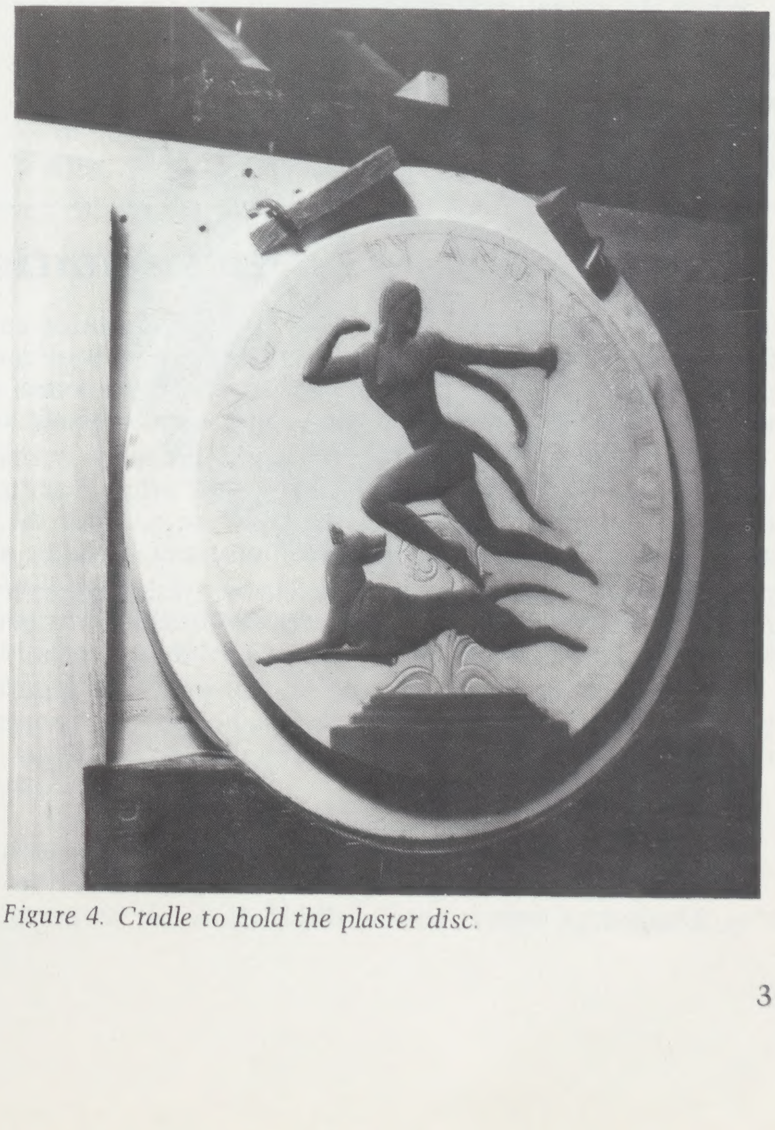


Figure 4. Cradle to hold the plaster disc.

Edward R. Grove, **The Alphabet Medal,** 1973.

Edward R. Grove, **World of Nature,** reverse, 1980.

Edward R. Grove, **Roster of Sculptors,** obverse, 1980.

three makes I have tried, the Luxo is definitely my preference. It is more adjustable, handsomely designed, and widely available.

When the modeling is completed and you are ready for casting, a completely new group of tools is needed, many of which can be found in the hardware store. To begin we need a three inch wide putty knife, with the blade ground and sharpened almost to a knife edge. This will be used in separating the cast from the mold. Another knife, with a narrowed blade about five or six inches long, will be just right for stirring the plaster mix. This apparently has less tendency to create bubbles - which you will find are a very special nemesis for the medallist. A shallow dipper with a long handle is best for scooping the bubbles off the top of the mix. An aluminum or heavy plastic scoop is necessary for transferring the plaster from its container to the gallon-size plastic bucket in which the plaster is combined with the water.

To complete the general list of equipment for your work, you may add two wide-mouth glass jars for the separator and lacquer; two or three flat brushes, one inch, one half inch, or the like; a soft dust brush for cleaning the mold before coating it with separator and a metal turntable with a top at least six inches in diameter and raised four inches or more from the base. This comples our plaster casting equipment. A small hand vibrator is an excellent investment. I use an Oster, Model 206. I've used also a dental vibrator table with good results.

I'm sure that each of my fellow medallists has one or more favorite tools or accessories which I've either overlooked or do not know of, and which they have found to be extremely useful. I often questions one's individual techniques determine the need for a particular assortment of tools? Or do the tools we choose, prescribe, at least to some degree, the resulting techniques? I wonder!

The preceding is a chapter from Mr. Grove's forthcoming book, *Art in Your Pocket: The World of Coins and Medals and How They are Made.*

An Invitation to Sculptors

Sculptors are invited to participate in the continuing competition to design medals for the Society of Medalists. As the Society of Medalists strives to produce the finest series of medals in the world, each medal must be a work of art. The sculptors participating may be citizens of any country in the world. A sculptor who has created a medal for the Society of Medalists will be eligible to compete for the commission to create another medal in the series after ten years.

The Society of Medalists issues two medals each year, one in the Spring and the other in the Fall. The competition for new issues is ongoing, and sculptors may submit original sketches in any form for both obverse and reverse designs at any time. The subject matter is the choice of the sculptor. At the time that sketches are submitted, it would be helpful if photographs of other work by the sculptor and a resume also were submitted.

Sketches will be reviewed by the Society of Medalists and the sculptors will be notified if their designs are selected or rejected. If rejected, the submitted material will be returned. The selected sculptor must prepare twelve inch plaster models for production of the accepted design. The medals usually are struck in bronze two and seven eights in diameter.

The honorarium for the completed, delivered, and approved plaster models, including all design rights thereto, is $3,500. Upon payment, the models and designs become the property of the Society of Medalists and they are copyrighted by the Society.

Please send submissions to:
Joseph Veach Noble, Executive Director
Society of Medalists
Old Ridgebury Road
Danbury, Connecticut 06810 U.S.A.

A Long Step Forward For The American Medal

by John Cook

U.S. Delegate to FIDEM and Professor of Art at Pennsylvania State University

Tangible yardsticks with which to measure artistic achievements are not always easy to find. This especially is true in estimating the developments being made in medallic art in the United States today. Against what are they to be gauged? Probably the most valid measurements available today are the biennial exhibitions of the Fédération Internationale de la Médaille, where we are provided the opportunity to compare the American medal with its counterpoint worldwide.

The 1985 FIDEM congress and concurrent "International Exhibition of Modern Medal Art", curated by Sweden's Royal Coin Cabinet and displayed at the Byggnadsstyrelsen in Stockholm this June, indicated, without doubt, that important changes altering the image and direction of our medals had been made during the past several years. For the first time the American public will have an opportunity to view these works which comprise the United States segment of the biennial at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Selected as the "Show of the Month" it opens December 6 and runs until the end of the Feb. Later in 1986 the show travels to the Museum of the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs.

Prior to the FIDEM exhibition of 1983 held in Florence's Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, the American selections had consistently been the products of our major private minting facility, through whose efforts this country continued to be represented at these prestigious biennials. This system, however, possessed certain inherent limitations, among them the fact that the artists whose works were exhibited seldom were informed either of their selection or of the exhibition itself. This important international showcase, thus, had neither meaning to the artist nor effect on his future professional work. Furthermore, it largely excluded unrecognized artists in the field, ignored unique experimental pieces and tended to focus exclusively upon the commercial struck medal. This resulted in a somewhat distorted view. A change of approach came with the Florence exhibition. In addition to the utilization of the archives of several of our private mints, a nationwide appeal for submissions was made directly to the medallists themselves. This made a notable change in the medals chosen to represent this country and, consequently, a change of image abroad.

In viewing the American medals in Stockholm, one was immediately struck with the varied and divergent approaches of the sixteen artists included. These ranged in style from Jeffrey Maron's *Mettle of Purpose* to Robert Weinman's *William Penn Tricentennial Medal.* Maron's somewhat esoteric work, a unique richly patined repousse medal, utilizes a drawing together of archaic signs in making oblique reference to a more basic and natural existence than our own. Its aim is a poetic sharing rather than an educational device, *Figure 1.* In sharp contrast is Robert Weinman's meticulously executed struck medal which presents a superb example of the official style long in favor on Capital Hill. It has its roots in the Governmental sculpture of the 1930s and employs an explicit narrative approach. Forceful, direct, and didactic, it concedes little to the aesthetics of the present day, *Figure 2.*

Somewhat between these stylistic extremes lie the remaining twenty-nine medals. One point is apparent. Just as this country is composed of peoples representing many diverse heritages, the artistic products also remain multifaceted. This is a strength we must acknowledge and preserve.

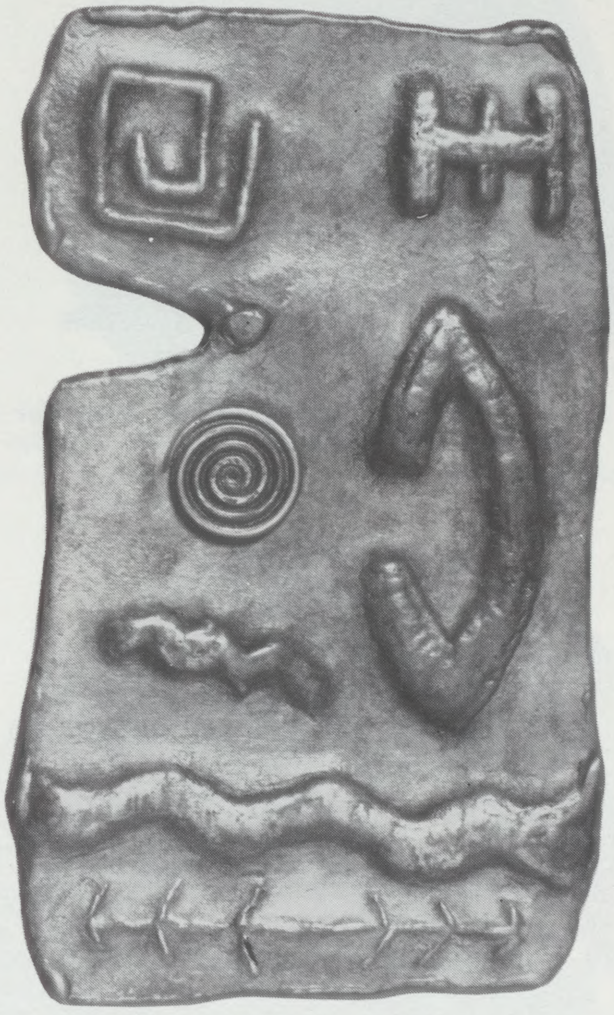


Figure 1. Jeffrey Maron, ***Mettle of Purpose,*** *repousee bronze, 96 x 57 mm*

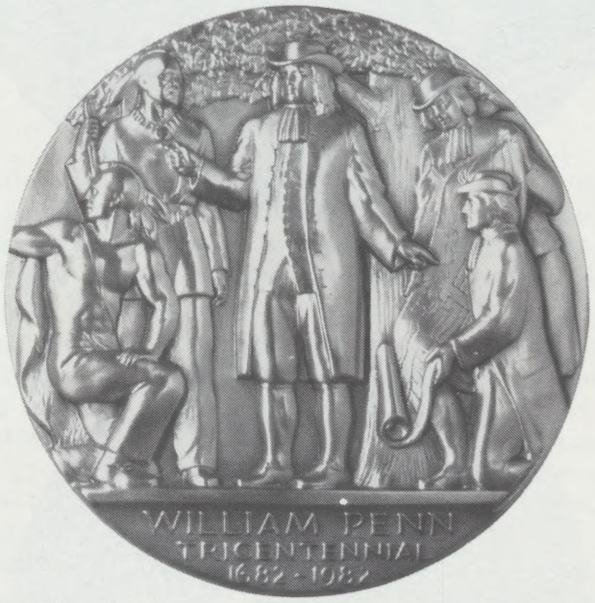


Figure 2. Robert Weinman, ***William Penn Tricentennial, Pennsylvania Masonic Grand Master Medal,*** *struck bronze, 77 mm*

The second realization experienced when viewing this biennial is that the overall American quality is, by world standards, surprisingly high. In some respects however, the American selections suffer in comparison

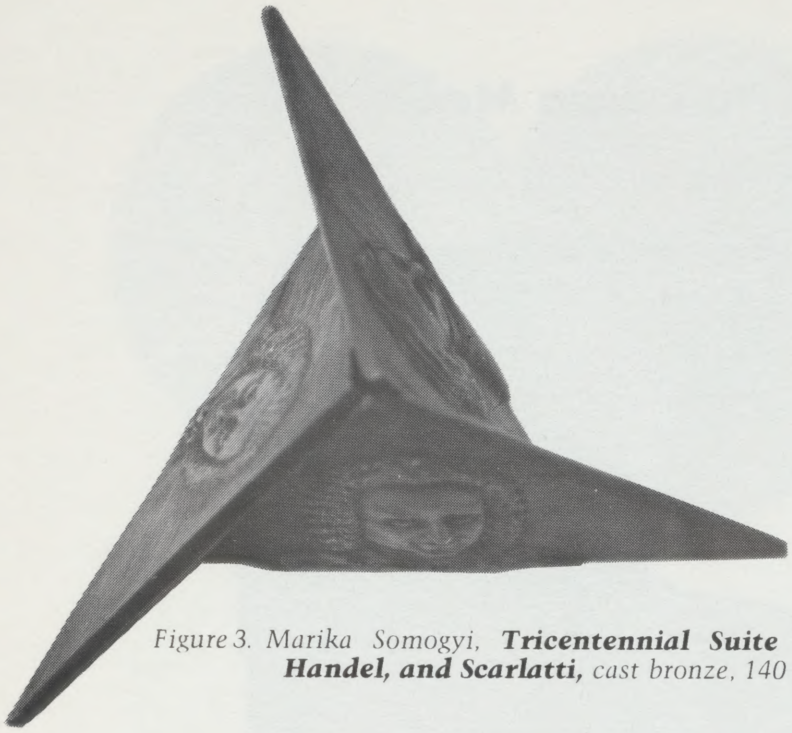


Figure 3. Marika Somogyi, **Tricentennial Suite for Bach, Handel, and Scarlatti,** cast bronze, 140 mm

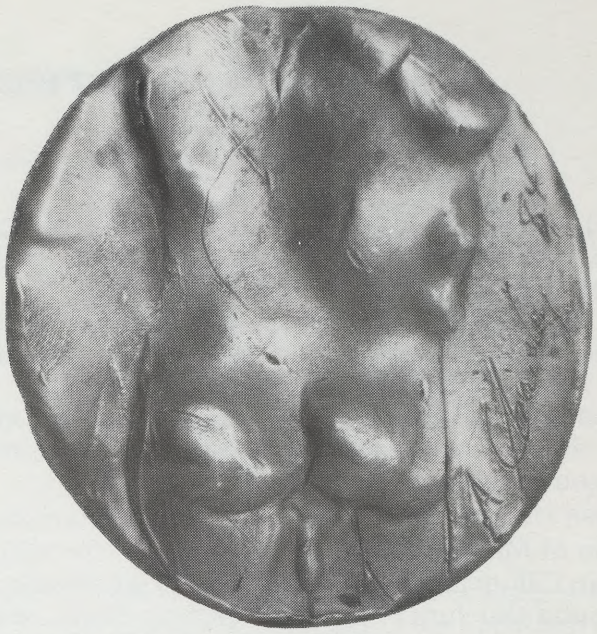


Figure 6. Alfred Charley, **Bas-relief,** cast bronze, 87 mm

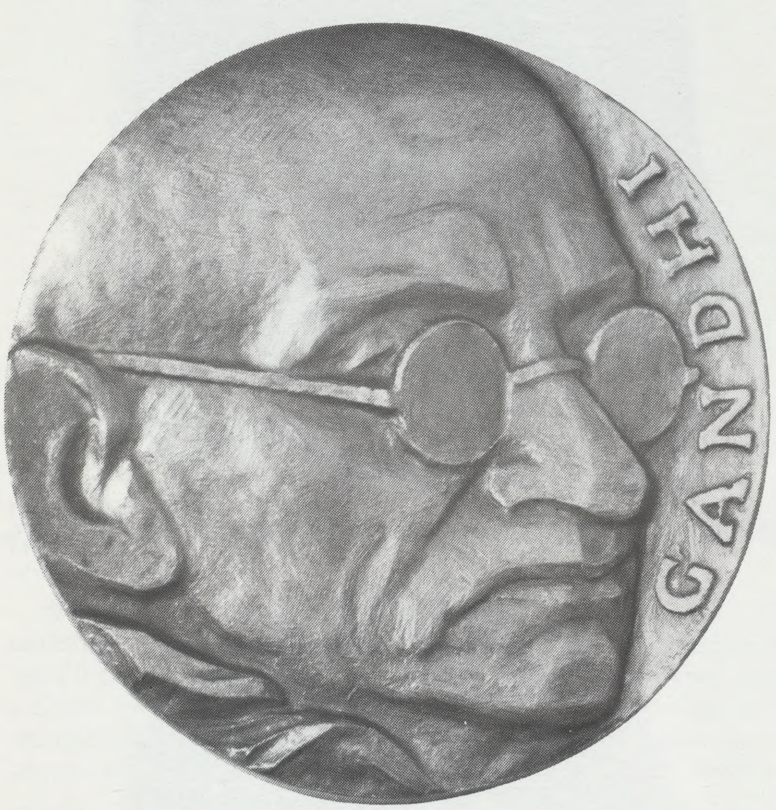


Figure 4. Alex Shagin, **Gandhi,** cast bronze, 75 mm

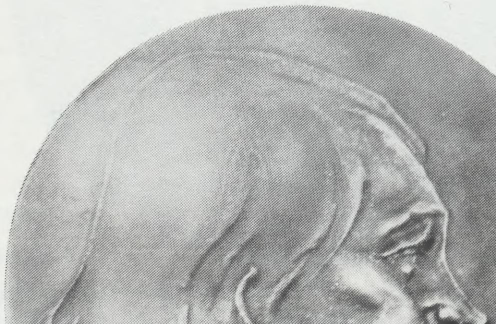


Figure 5. Bud Wertheim, **Kauko Rasanen,** cast bronze, 102mm

with the works of those countries having long and rich medallic traditions. What we exhibited is generally not as daring as some of the medals (and anti-medals) originating in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary where the definition of what constitutes a medal is often stretched to its extreme. Neither are the American Medals, in most instances, as technically brilliant as some of the contemporary struck medals being produced in Portugal or France. Nor do we, as yet, enjoy the vast cultural awareness upon which to draw that is evidenced in the Italian and Spanish medals. In an historical sense, we are still the "new boys on the block" and yet have a way to go before reaching our potential. That potential, however, is enormous and is just beginning to be realized both here and abroad. American medals are now being taken seriously.

The ingenious conceptualization in Marika Somogyi's *Tricentennial Suite* is an example of exploration of new possibilities within the art. Composed of three inter-locking trianular forms portraying Domenico Scarlatti, Friederick Handel and Sebastian Bach, it creates a sculptural pinwheel which is both original and effective, (*Figure 3*). Portraiture remained a reoccurring theme in this years American selections. Somogyi was also represented by her massive cast Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya medal; Alex Shagin by his powerful portrayal of Gandhi, *Figure 4*; Leonda Finke by her sensitive rendering of Georgia O'Keeffe; and Bud Wertheim, a newcomer to the field, by a well-received portrait of Kauko Rasanen, *Figure 5*.

Several other sculptors, working only recently with the medal and showing for the first time in this biennial, were Christopher Gowell, Sergio di Giusti, and Alfred Charley. The modelling in the three works by Charley, *Itaglio, Bas-relief,Figure 6*, and *Backside*, introduced to the exhibition a rich level of plasticity and tactile sensitivity. Loose, spontaneous, softly fluid, and reflecting the wax sheet in which it was originally modelled, the pushed and pulled forms are emphasized and counterpointed by a sharp linear element. These three pieces, which won him considerable acclaim in Europe, were produced in The Pennsylvania State University's International Medallic Art Workshop. The medals by Gowell and Wertheim were also presented there. Di Giusti, represented by two medals, *Wrapped Canto* and *The Vigil, Figure 7*, displays his expertise with the relief form. Both show an ease in transferring his imagery to a miniature scale. This infusion of new artists to the field is welcome and of great significance for without continuous renewal this art form would cease to exist.

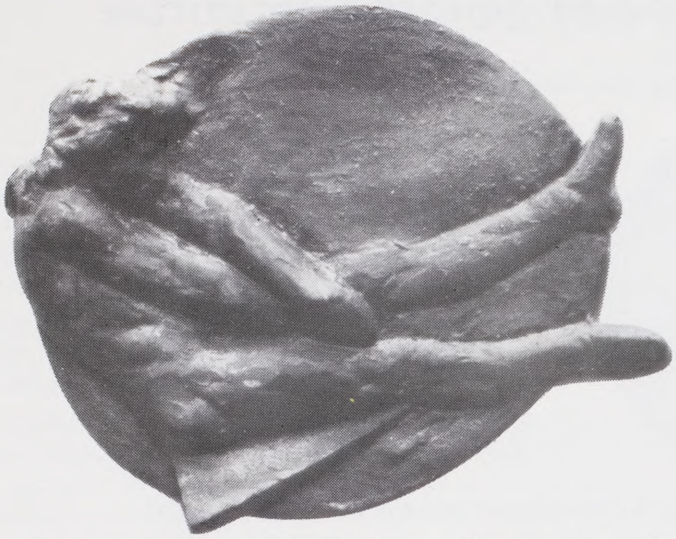


Figure 7. Sergio De Guisti, **The Vigil,** struck bronze, 115 x 130 mm

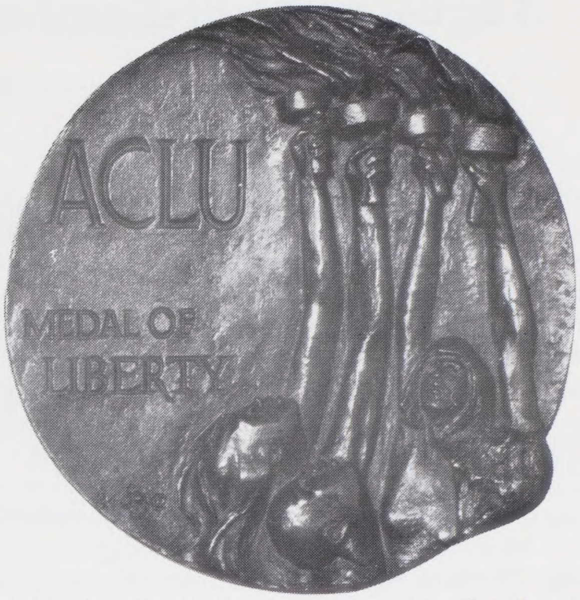


Figure 9. Stanley Bleifield, **American Civil Liberty Union Medal of Liberty,** cast bronze, 124 mm

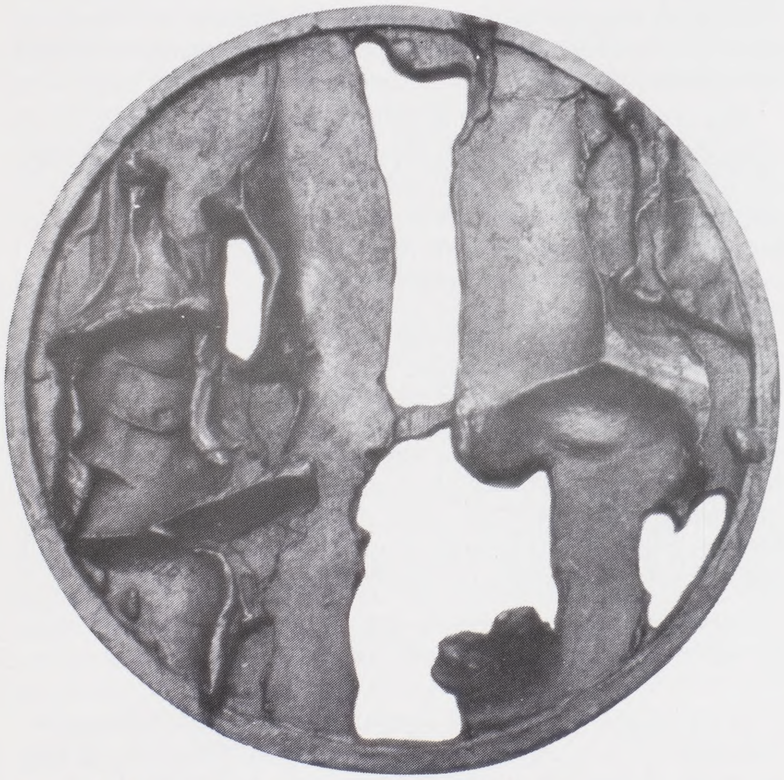


Figure 8. Micro Kaufman, cast bronze, 147 mm

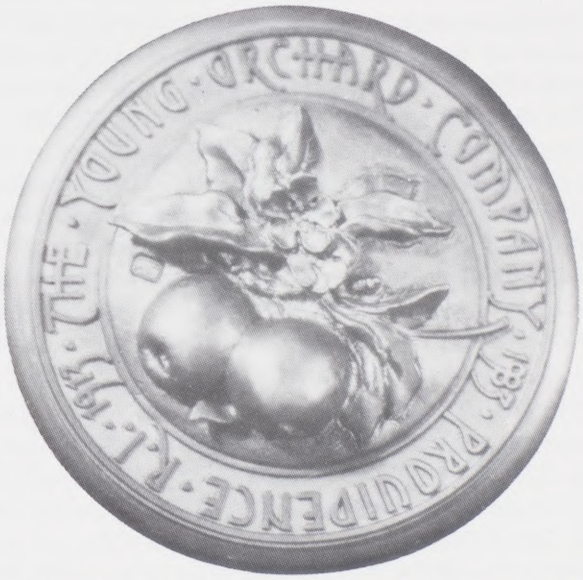

THE · YOUNG · ORCHARD · COMPANY · 1913 · PROVIDENCE · R.I. · 1913

Figure 10. Merlin Szösz, **Young Orchard Company Medal,** cast bronze, 96 mm

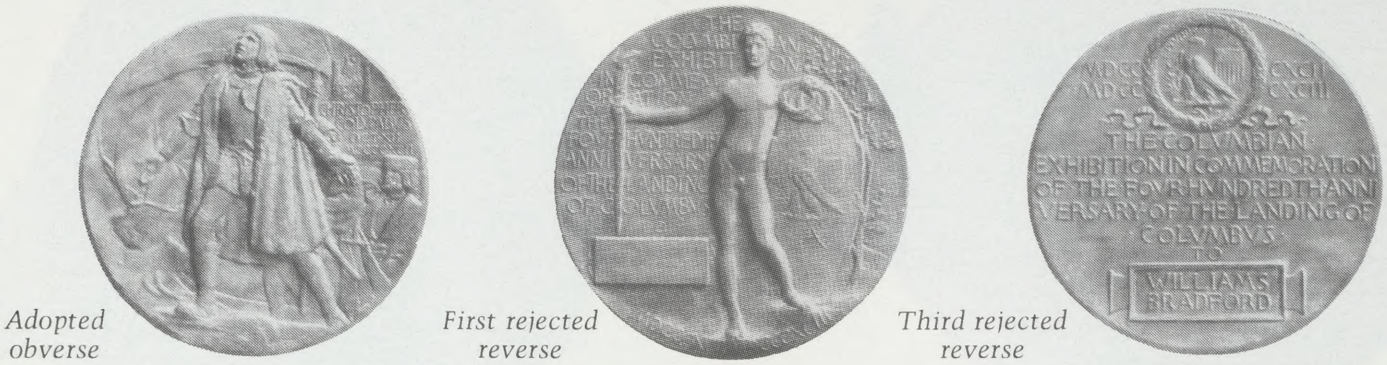
Brookgreen Gardens, one of the leading patrons of medallic art, was well-represented with works by John Cook, Karen Worth, and Marcel Jovine. Another widely known name in the field, Mico Kaufman, excited viewers with four large cast medals. Using highly imaginative open forms, they conveyed great energy and evidenced another dimension in his sculptural vocabulary, *Figure 8*. Stanley Bleifeld showed an earthy and strongly modelled *American Civil Liberties Union Medal of Liberty*, *Figure 9* in cast bronze. Merlin Szösz, sculptor of this years *American Delegation FIDEM Medal* (see *Medallic Sculpture*, Spring 1985, page 2) has three works in this years selection. His cast bronze *Young Orchard Company Medal, Figure 10*, in unusually high relief, is a technical *tour de force* which sets new standards for what is possible within the casting process. Further, his award medal for the Rhode Island School of Design demonstrates the richness which can be achieved in the struck form. Lyrical and quietly elegant, it ranks among the finest commissioned pieces in the exhibition. Equally elegant is Leonard Baskin's *Virginia Steele Scott Foundation Medal.* The dramatic modelling and delineation of this two inch octagon lends a jewel-like quality and readily explains why Baskin's medals have repeatedly been chosen to represent this country.

Thus, coming from a position of weakness, American medals with this exhibition in Stockholm, have moved further toward a position demanding both interest and respect. Whether we will sustain the advances made, much less become a leading force in this movement, remains to be seen. The next FIDEM congress, scheduled to be held in Colorado Springs, September 11-15, 1987, under the auspices of the American Numismatic Association, will be the first FIDEM congress and biennial exhibition to be held outside continental Europe. It poses an enormous challenge. As it is also the 50th anniversary of the founding of this organization. The event will be an especially important one in the art world, drawing more visitors, more medals, and more interest than ever before. Our efforts and achievements will be openly and critically compared with those of past host nations and we will be judged by what we deliver rather than upon our potential. As medallic artists we will be the focus of this congress, for the *art* of the medal is the governing interest of the Féderation Internationale de la Médaille.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens Rejected by Senate Committee

by E.J. Leotti

Editor of the **Medallist,** Oceanside, California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THE COLUMBIAN EXHIBITION IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FOVR HVNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LANDING OF COLVMBVS TO
WILLIAMS BRADFORD

Adopted obverse

First rejected reverse

Third rejected reverse

Figure 1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, **Columbian Exposition Commemorative Presentation Medal**

Rejection, Censure, both are bitter words, though each has been known to artists throughout history. Almost every medallist has been forced to come to terms with the morals and the fashion of his times. Each has been obligated to decide whether to bow down to the arbiters of the day or to stand against them in defense of his own individual art. If the medallist chooses to fight, all too frequently he is carving the epitaph or the tombstone of his public career.

At the height of his fame, the great Augustus Saint-Gaudens found himself face to face with rejection and censure. He roared at the twin evils with a rush of words: "Mr. Carlisle's may be the legal right to combine my work with that of another on the same medal, but the rare shamelessness of such offense will be appreciated by all my confreres at home and abroad, and it is as much in their interest as in my own unbridled astonishment that I make this protest public."[1]

Saint-Gaudens' angry words were published in a letter to the editor of the New York *Tribune* in 1893. A United States Senate committee had just rejected his design for the reverse of the World's Columbian Exposition Commemorative Presentation Medal, a piece which Saint-Gaudens originally had been commissioned to execute. Instead, the committee had chosen for the reverse a design by the "commercial medallist", Mint Engraver Charles E. Barber.

Saint-Gaudens' accepted obverse design was of Columbus, landing in the New World. For the reverse, he had submitted the figure of a nude youth in the classic Greek hip-shot pose. Somehow, before the medal was struck, a New Hampshire firm obtained a copy of the model. With malicious motivation, they printed and circulated "a caricature of it so villainous that the boy, who on the original stood as a bit of artistic idealism, appeared in all the vulgar indecency that can be conveyed by the worst connotation of the word nakedness. At once the morality for which our nation is notorious took fire."[3] As a result of this uproar, the Senate committee rejected the design.

At first, Saint-Gaudens put aside his artistic sensibilities, gritted his teeth, and modified the design. The second model was embellished with discreetly-placed drapery. It, too, was rejected. Totally outraged, Saint-Gaudens submitted a third model which consisted of nothing more than the inscription and the small figure of an eagle. About this, Saint-Gaudens said: "I had this time in my composition - scrupulously turning from classic thought of humanity, draped or undraped - surely avoided all erotic insinuation by the substitution, for the offending figure, of 'The Bird', whose fair fame is beyond suggestive possibilities."[4] Incomprehensively, the committee rejected this design as well.

The medal was struck with Saint-Gaudens' obverse design of Christopher Columbus setting foot on the shores of the western world. Columbus stands with his head upraised, his arms outstretched, and his right foot forward. Behind his billowing cloak three crewmen were partly visible. The scene is simple yet dramatic.

The chosen reverse depicts Charles Barber's somewhat overwrought design. It consists of two winged female figures, one with a trumpet and one with a tablet. On either side of a globe, these figures kneel upon the central motif with a scroll which is inscribed and flanked by flaming torches. Below, partially obscured by the decorative scroll, may be found Columbus ship, the Santa Maria. Interestingly, the angels are bare-bosomed, a fact which did not offend the "notorious" public morality of the day.

Curiously, the original design of the nude lad may not have been by Augustus Saint-Gaudens at all. There is documentation which indicates that his brother, Louis, executed the figure under Augustus' direction.[5] Augustus had many studio assistants who worked with him on his carvings. Among them were men such as Frederick MacMonnies, Bela Pratt, and John Flanagan who would go on to great acclaim as medallists.[6] Apparently, Saint-Gaudens had no objection to combining his work with that of another as long as he could select the other artist and supervise the work.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens lost his skirmish with rejection and censorship and chose not to turn the issue into a battle. He did rally fellow artists to his side in the brief hue and cry. The incident had little effect on his career. The end result, however, was that the opportunity for a beautiful, well-balanced medal was lost. We are left with the promise of the obverse and the disappointment of the static, fussy reverse. The unbalanced medal remains as evidence of the unjust result when art versus public morality and a Senate committee!

Footnotes:

1. Saint-Gaudens, Homer. *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens.* Vol. II. New York: The Century Co., 1913, p. 72.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 67
3. *Ibid.,* pp. 66-67.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 68.
5. Dryfhout, John H., *The Work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens.* Hanover and London, University Press of New England, 1982, p. 202.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 316.

Plaster Molds and Casts

by Donald Dow
Medallic Sculptor

There are several basic rules which must be followed to insure good plaster molds and casts. Store the plaster in a dry place and off dirt and concrete floors. Mix plaster and water by weight not by guesswork. Time the steps by sound not by sight. Allow the plaster to soak in the water before stirring; and when you stir, stir thoroughly. Lastly, *never* allow casts or molds to dry completely before separating them.

I prefer to use U.S. Gypsum Number One (#1) pottery plaster because it has no additives. This is not for my health but for ease in making corrections in a dry mold or cast. Many plasters have additives to shorten the setting time or give them a hard, less porous surface that won't soak up paint. The so-called art plasters used for casting plaques and figures which are meant to be painted later is typical. This hard surface is about one to two thousandths of an inch thick over a comparatively soft underlying plaster. If you sandpaper or try to tool art plaster you will always have a little step right at that demarcation line where you have gone from the resistant surface to the soft plaster. This step is not one or two thousandths of an inch but more like three to five thousandths of an inch because you can not control that pressure as you step from one level to the other.

In order to keep your plaster dry invest in some ten gallon plastic garbage buckets with handles and tight fitting plastic lids which can be bought at your grocery supermarket. They hold about thirty pounds of plaster. The plastic bottom protects the material from cold and camp floor and the tight lid seals the plaster from humidity. Absorption of humidity is significant in some areas. The handles of the container make it easier to lug the plaster around or up and down stairs.

To measure your plaster and water you will need two plastic buckets and a fairly accurate kitchen scale. The buckets should weigh the same and each should have a two and one half gallon capacity. Put one of the buckets on the scale and adjust the scale to read zero. From then on you are only weighing the *contents* of the buckets and not the buckets themselves.

You will need a fence or wall above your model to contain, or hold, your wet plaster so it doesn't flow all over the bench. I have bought a thirty-six inch square sheet of aluminum at the local builder-handyman store, taken it to a sheet metal shop, and had it sheared into two by thirty-six inch strips. This is a ten year supply. A thirty-six inch strip will handle an eleven inch diameter (overall) pattern. If your pattern is larger than eleven inches, use two strips and overlap them.

To keep these fences in place around your pattern you will need some *Kemper* mold straps from a ceramic supply house. These straps are color coded for length. The smallest, green, will be more than ample for your needs. If you are not familiar with the operation of mold straps, have the clerk give you a demonstration and make sure you understand it before you leave the shop.

Wrap the aluminum strip around your pattern and then tighten the strap to firmly hold the strip so there is no chance for it to slip. At the joint where the aluminum and your pattern come together, apply a bead or fillet of plastalina just as if you were caulking a window. You don't want any plaster leaking down between the pattern and the fence.

The next step is to soap the mold. And, I mean SOAP! You will use *Tincture of Green Soap* which you can buy by the pint in most pharmacies or by the gallon at surgical supply houses. A pint will last you through about 100 pounds of plaster. In a wide mouth peanut butter jar or similar container mix one part soap to three parts of water. Contrary to what most sculptors believe, this mixture is not to put a coating on the plaster, but to actually change the chemical composition of the plaster. Use about one ounce, a shot glass, on an eleven inch diameter mold. Work it briskly into the plaster with a one inch wide genuine pig bristle brush. I buy these at Standard Brands Paint Company for forty-nine cents each. Let the plaster soak up this solution for about twenty minutes. Then rinse thoroughly, but gently, under running water to remove all the solution except that which is incorporated in the plaster. Gently but firmly burnish the entire surface with a soft tissue until it shines. Brush out crevasses to remove any residue.

Now for the big trick that was taught to me by Ramon Gordils, for many years "the plaster man" at Medallic Art Company. Hold the palm of your hand over the open top of a bottle of Mazola corn oil, invert the bottle, and then hold it upright again. The small amount that sticks to your palm is enough to coat an eleven inch diameter piece of plaster. With a brush like the one you used in the soaping operation, apply the oil as uniformly as you can over the plaster, especially into crevasses and into lettering that has almost vertical sides. Use a scrubbing action. Make sure you have no excess buildup or the new plaster will be fuzzy.

Let us presume our model or plaster is eleven inch diameter. The formula is: PLASTER X .7 = WATER. Notice that decimal point in front of the 7. This job needs three pounds of plaster, so three X .7 = 2.1 pounds of water. Forget the .1 and we'll say two pounds of water. In one of your buckets weigh the plaster and in the other weigh the water. Add the plaster to the water. Let the plaster sink by itself. You can jiggle the bucket a little to help, but don't try to force anything or you'll get air bubbles and lumps. Don't worry if this operation takes about a minute. Now you need a count-down stop watch or a count-down kitchen timer. When the last of the plaster has become wet, let it sit undisturbed for about four minutes. The plaster must *soak* before you stir or there will be lumps. Now, pick up some of that .1 pound of water we got rid of a while ago. You need a spray bottle such as those which contain Windex or other household products. Fill with plain water and spray into any depression that could trap an air bubble. Do this in the four minutes that the plaster is soaking. When the four minutes are up, mix the plaster for about three minutes with your bare hand, or until the consistency becomes creamy. When you start mixing it will be thick on the bottom and watery on top. Mix until it's a homoginous mass.

Start to pour at one edge and watch the water you sprayed move ahead of the mass of plaster. This way you will know you have no bubbles. When you have completed the pour, place the palm of your hand absolutely flat on the center of the job and move it up and down about an eighth of an inch, three or four times. This will distribute that film of water you have just pushed around and you have a flat surface when the plaster hardens.

If you have used #1 pottery plaster set your stopwatch or timer for one hour and twenty-five minutes. When the time is up, remove the mold strap and the fence. Insert a *hollow* *ground* knife at the parting line and tap lightly, but firmly, with a hammer. You should have perfect results.

In closing, the use of soap is necessary only when pouring plaster on plaster. In pouring plaster on plastalina, nothing is needed. Plaster under no circumstances will stick to plastalina. All that is necessary when pouring plaster on metal, epoxy, glass, or vinyl is the corn oil. If the pattern is porous, as is wood, shellac or varnish it and then use oil.

Remember the admonition in the first paragraph of this article. Don't let plasters dry completely before separating them. Three pounds of plaster and two pounds of water comes to a five pound moist chunk an hour after mixing. Ten days later that chunk will be *bone dry* and weigh about three and one half pounds. One and one half pounds of water has been lost through evaporation, but a half pound has been utilized in the water of crystalization. In utilizing this water of crystalization, the crystals have continued to grow each second as the plaster has hardened. Each second the fit between mold and cast gets tighter and tighter. Eventually one or the other will break in parting. The best test is the temperature test. Shortly after solidifying, plaster will get warm to the touch, warmer than body temperature. This is the period of rapid crystalization. When it cools to less than body temperature is the time to part them. Any delay is dangerous.

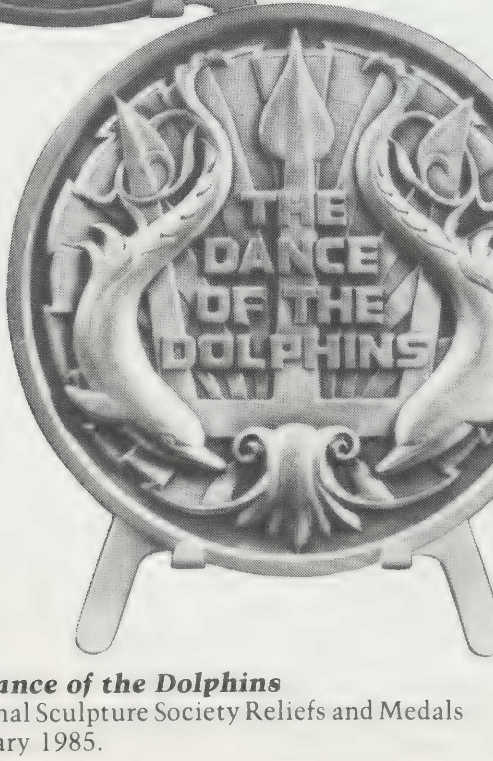
It is not necessary to allow a newly poured cast or mold to dry before going through the process again. Many times I make a mold, make a correction on it, and again pour new plaster on it within forty-five minutes. If you are going to pour epoxy on it or if a galvano is to be made, then the plaster must be dry.

One pound of fresh dry plaster will yield about twenty-four cubic inches of hard plaster. Remember the formula learned in school. The volume of a cylinder is radius squared times Pi times the length (or heighth) of the cylinder. If the diameter of your pattern is eleven inches then the radius is 5.5 inches (half of 11"). Radius squared is 5.5 X 5.5 or 30.25. 30.25 X 3.1416 (pi) is 95. If you want to make this pattern .75 inch high (thick) then 95 X .75 = 71.25. Now, one pound of plaster is twenty-four cubic inches so we divide 71.25 by 24 and we come up with a requirement of 2.968 pounds of plaster. That is how I arrived at the three pound figure. I'm not going to quibble over 4/100ths of a pound.

Plaster is cheap. Labor is expensive. Don't skimp. If you are unsure of what thickness to make, go on the heavy side. It is heart-breaking to have a plaster break in the parting process because you made it too thin in order to save a few cents worth of plaster.

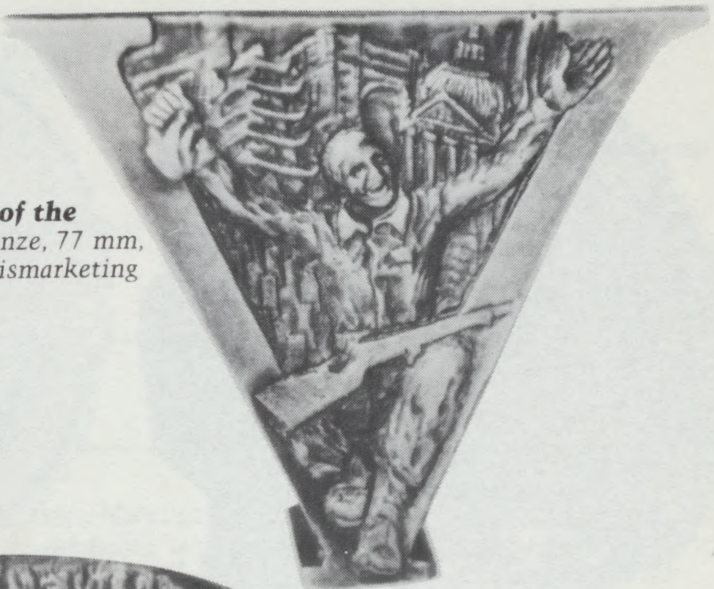
New Issues

Eugene Daub, ***Mark Twain 100th Anniversary Centennial.***



Don Everhart II, ***Dance of the Dolphins***
First prize, National Sculpture Society Reliefs and Medals Exhibition, January 1985.

Eugene Daub, **LOUIS XIV.**



Marika Somogyi,
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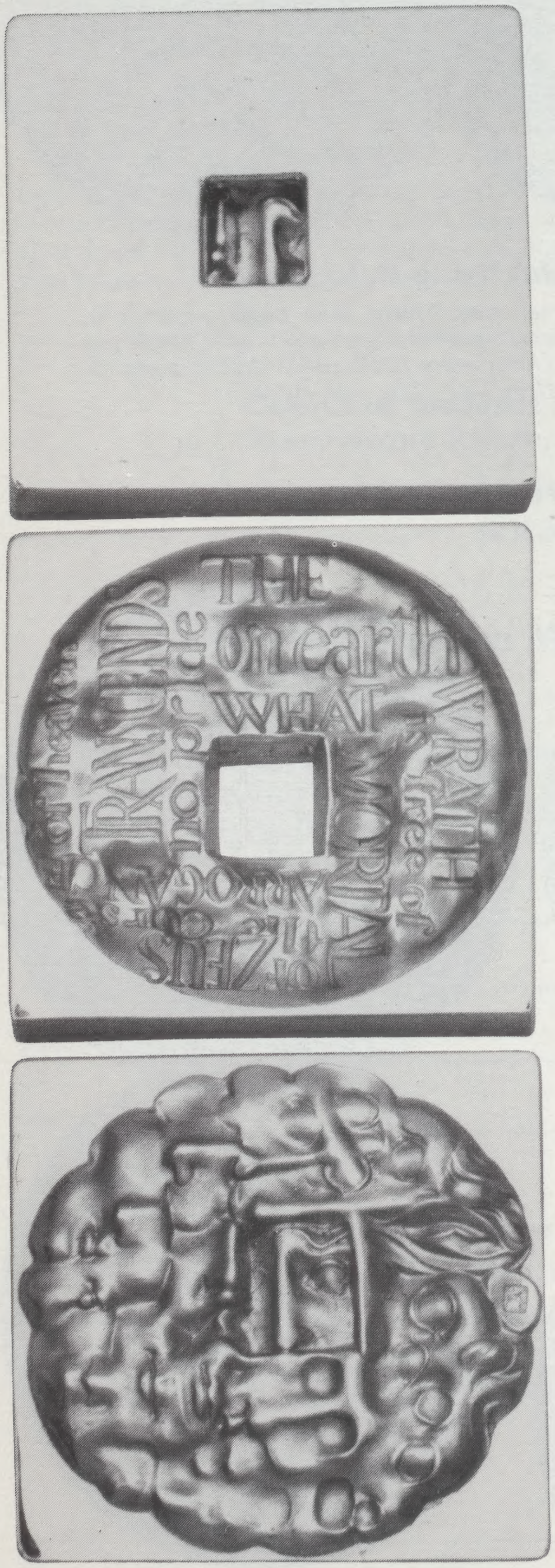

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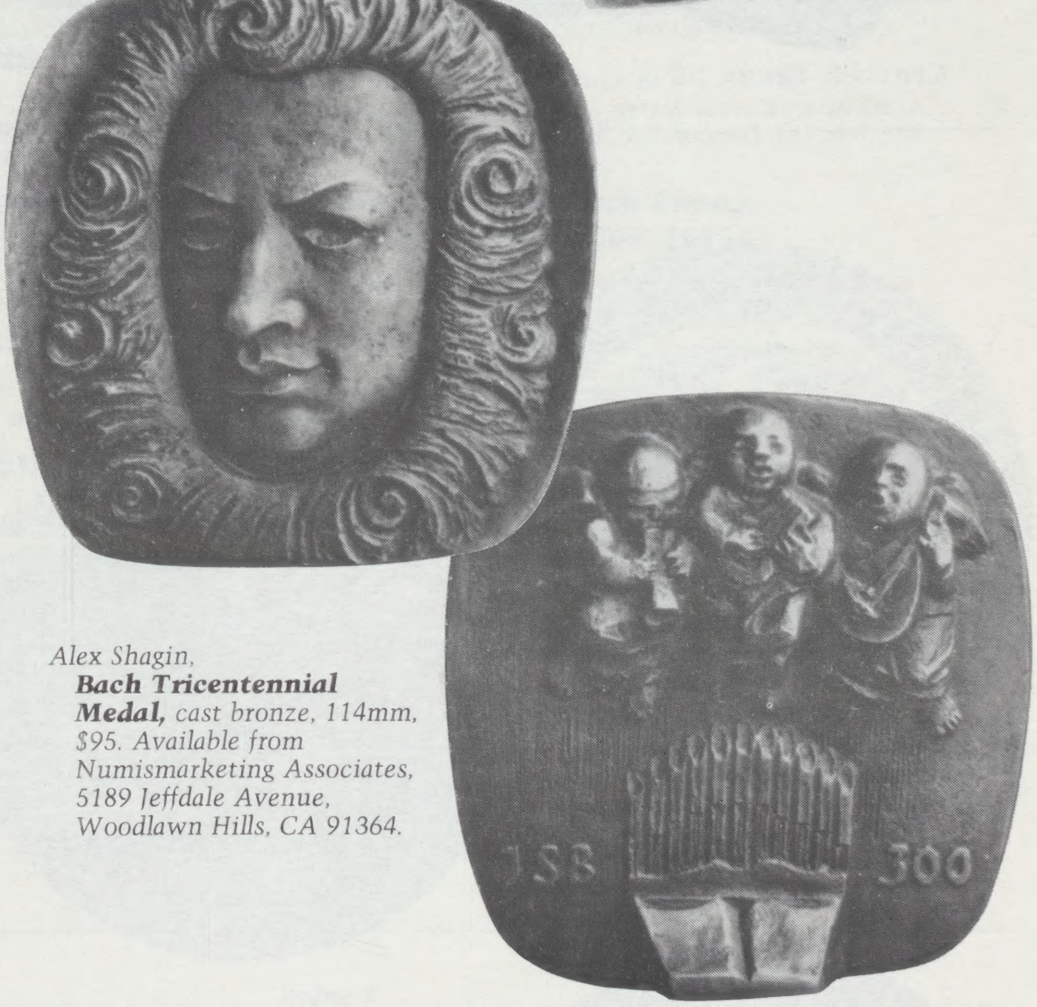
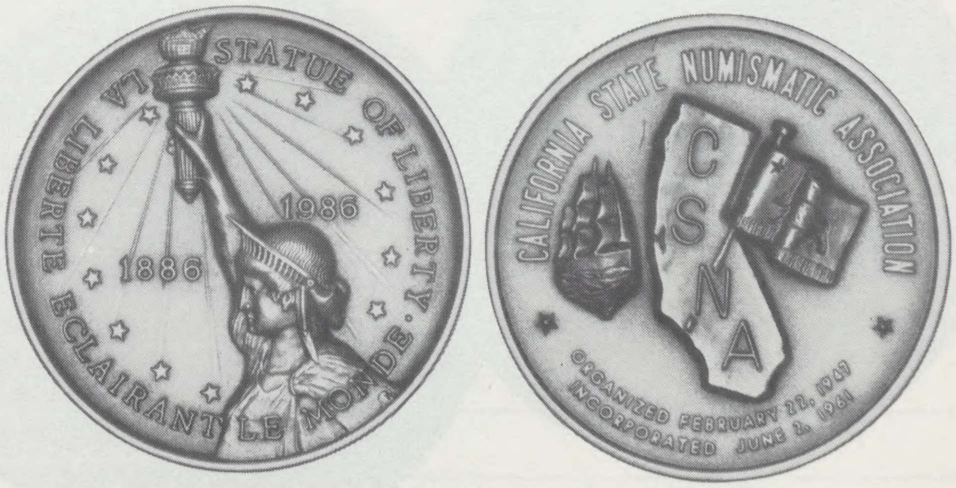


Alex Shagin,
Bach Tricentennial Medal, *cast bronze, 114mm, $95. Available from Numismarketing Associates, 5189 Jeffdale Avenue, Woodlawn Hills, CA 91364.*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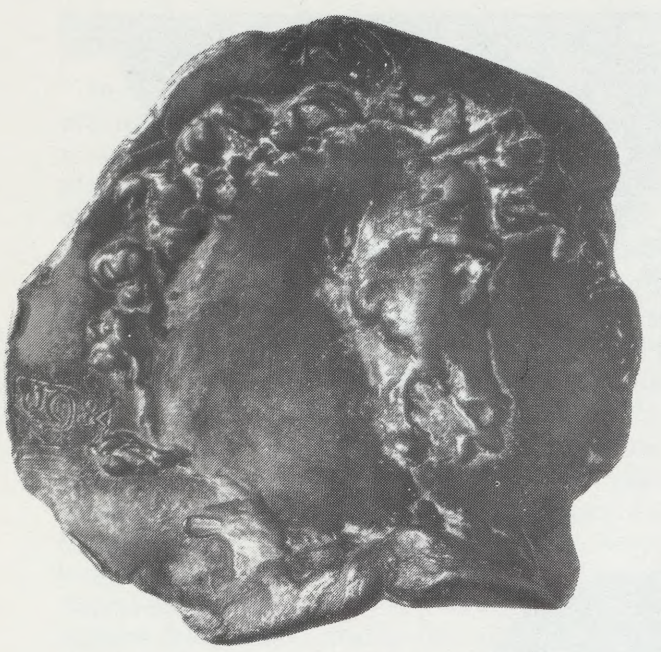

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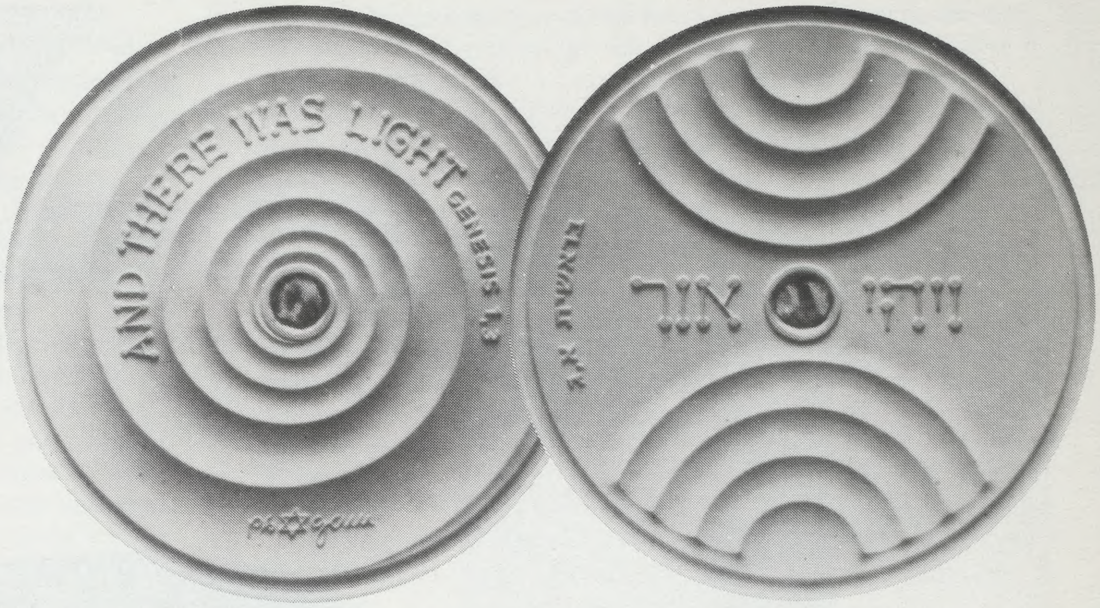

Medal Using Holography

Yaacov Agam of Israel, **And There Was Light,** *available in bronze, 63mm; silver, 25mm and 51mm; and in gold, 25mm and 38mm, from Israel Government Coins and Medals Corporation, 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10118.*

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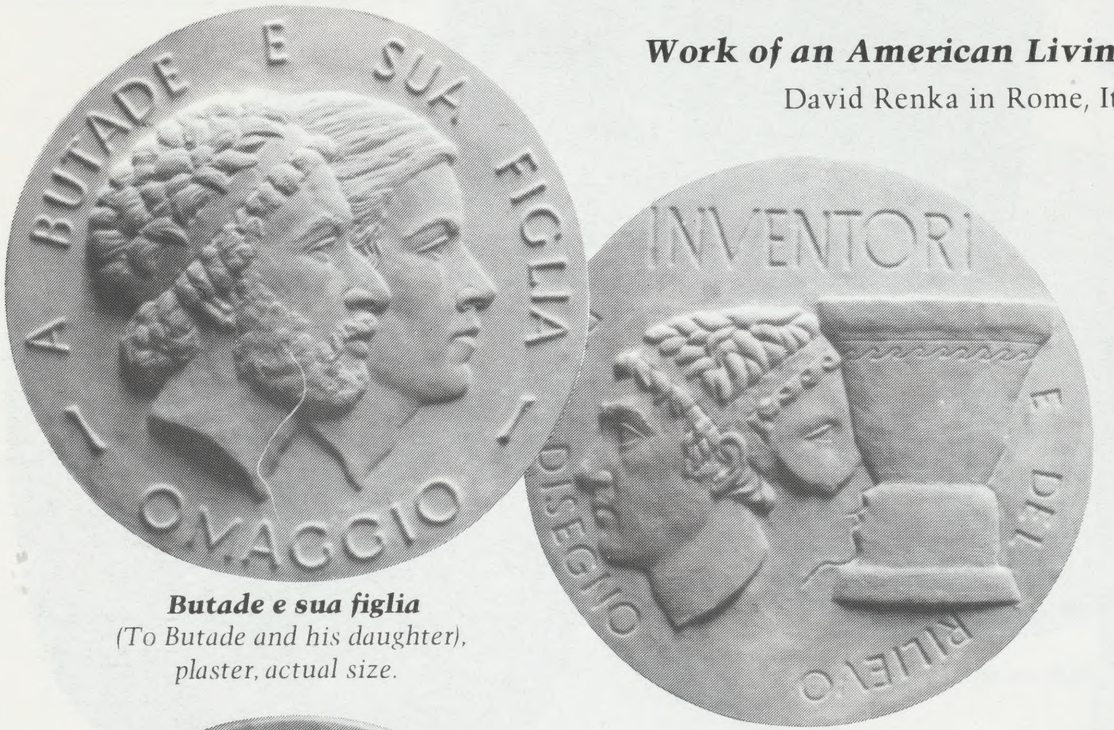
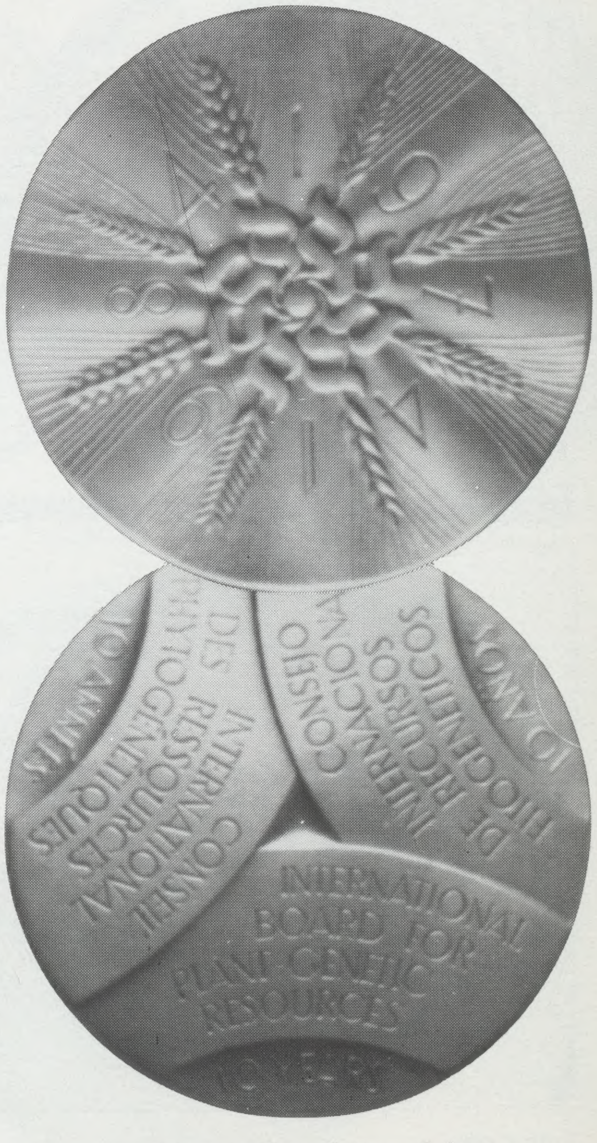


Butade e sua figlia
*(To Butade and his daughter),
plaster, actual size.*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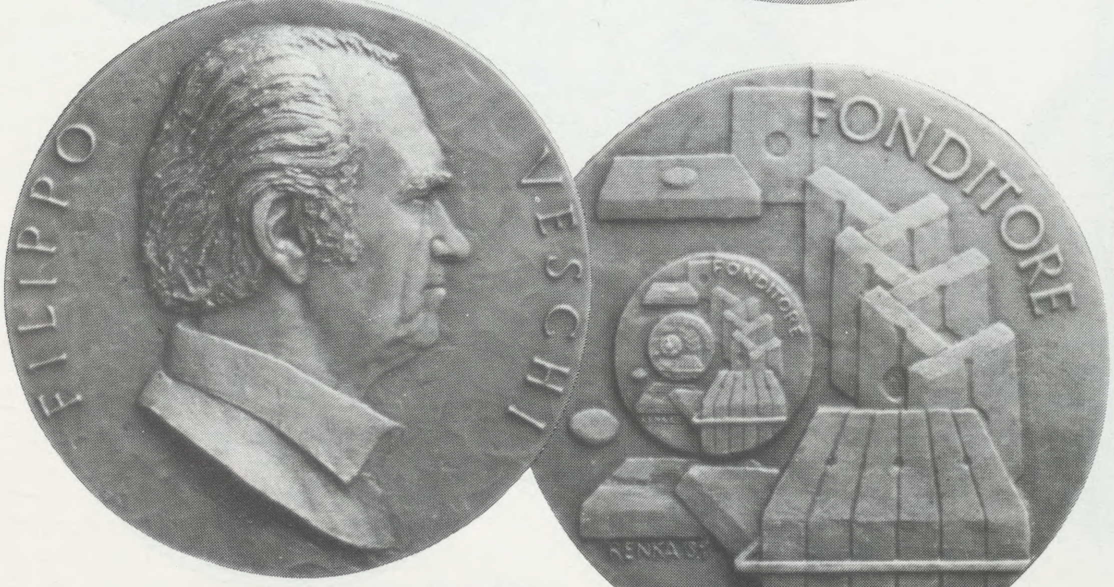

Veschi, *cast bronze, 75 mm.*

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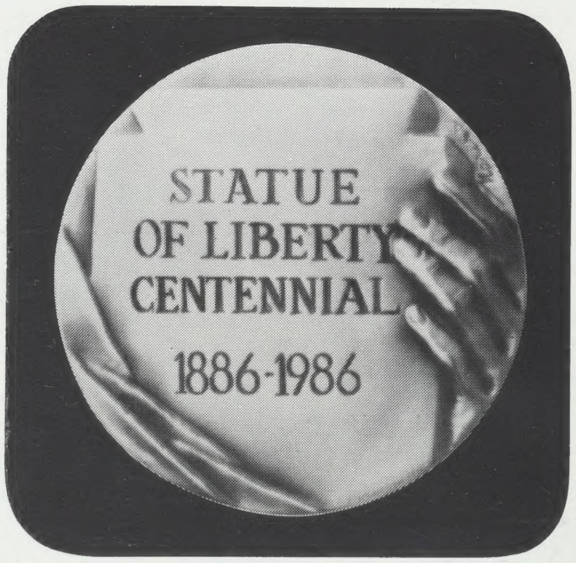
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